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ABSTRACT

The Distance Learning Program was implemented in 1984 by Ikipujung Pandang University to provide training opportunities for nondegree secondary school teachers in isolated rural areas of eastern Indonesia whereby they did not have to attend classes on a regular, full-time basis at a conventional educational institution. The program focuses on providing additional knowledge in subject matter fields and teaching skills. The basic instructional medium is the printed course book which provides a self-instruction package including an activities book, worksheet, and answer sheet dealing with a single conceptual unit of a subject matter. The program is operated at 15 learning centers located in local secondary schools where students come on weekday afternoons or Sundays to pick up materials, attend group discussions, receive tutoring, or take examinations. Forty-eight tutors with bachelors' or masters' degrees in education with major emphasis in the subject matter field they tutor are involved in the program. Program evaluation has identified problems concerning students' learning difficulties (particularly those related to study development and problems with the self-directed learning system), development and distribution of learning modules, geographic isolation, and the learning centers. Similar to results of conventional education at the university, over 90% of students in the distance program passed the final examination. (NEC)

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The Distance Learning Program at Ikipujung Pandang Indonesia

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THE DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM AT IKIPUJUNG PANDANG INDONESIA:

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe the distance learning program at IKIPUJUNG PANDANG University and to make recomendations for its improvements. The objectives of this study were to: 1) describe distance learning programs in general, 2) describe the distance learning program at IKIPUJUNG PANDANG for rural teachers, 3) identify problems related to the implementation of the proposed program, and 4) develop recommendations.

Through a review of literature, the researchers defined the concept of distance learning and characteristics of distance learning programs. A focus of the review included four general aspects by which distance learning programs are organized. The overview of Distance Learning Programs around the world was used as a basis for presenting information concerning distance learning centered concepts, principles, and characteristics. To fulfill their need for teachers, IKIPUJUNG PANDANG University has introduced a special program for continuing education and training of teachers located in rural areas. This program is called Distance Learning Program. It is a program which provides training opportunities for secondary school teachers working in rural areas. This means that the teachers can take courses without having to attend classes on the campus. The Distance Learning Program brings the class to the learner.

The Distance Learning Program at IKIPUJUNG PANDANG was implemented in 1984. The researchers were assigned the task of evaluating the initial period of the program and developing recommendations for its improvement. The major problems identified to date were: 1) student's learning difficulties, particularly those related to study techniques and problems with the self-directed learning system, 2) the problem with the development and distribution of learning modules, 3) problems related to geographic isolation, and 4) problems related to learning centers. The researchers conducted a computer search of the literature on distance learning through the Washington State University library to define the concept of distance learning, characteristics, and general aspects about which distance learning programs were organized. Interviews were conducted with a number of Indonesian faculty and participants in the distance

learning program. The conclusions from the review of the literature and survey indicated that the major problems with the University's Distance Learning program were 1) student learning difficulties, 2) problems related to the development and distribution of learning models, 3) problems related to geographical isolation, and 4) problems related to managing the learning centers. The recommendations were made to help solve these problems.

INTRODUCTION

Background Information

The Institute of Teacher Training and Educational Sciences in Ikipujung Pandang, South Sulawesi Province is one of the teacher training institutions for secondary and post-secondary school teachers in Indonesia. Ikipujung Pandang consists of six colleges. Each college is made up of several departments and each department has a degree and non-degree program. The undergraduate program requires a minimum of 144 credit hours and a maximum of 160 hours. The program ranges in duration from four to seven years after senior high school. The graduates from this program become teachers in senior high school.

The Directorate General of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture recognized that graduates in the field would need additional knowledge in their subject matter fields and improved teaching skills. However, these graduates must begin working immediately upon graduating in order to fulfill the demand for teachers. The need for teachers is particularly acute in rural secondary schools.

For the first time, non-degree program students at Ikipujung Pandang graduated in 1980. Since then they have served as secondary school teachers for two or more years in the eastern part of Indonesia.

Problem and Objectives

The Distance Learning Program at Ikipujung Pandang was implemented in the 1982-1983 academic year. Much work has been done to develop and evaluate the program. The task force at the Distance Learning Program at Ikipujung Pandang has identified problems related to the implementation of the program. The writer identified the major problem areas as 1) students learning difficulties, 2) development and distribution of learning modules, 3) geographic isolation, and 4) learning centers.

The basic objectives of the study were 1) to describe basic concepts, characteristics, and general aspects by which distance learning programs are organized; 2) to describe the Distance Learning Program at Ikipujung Pandang; 3) to identify problems with the implementation of the distance learning program at Ikipujung Pandang; and 4) to develop specific recommendations for improvement of the program.

Procedures

An overview of distance learning programs around the world was used as a basis for presenting a description of the distance learning program in Indonesia. A survey was sent to faculty members in Indonesia who were involved in the Distance Learning Program. Materials and reports concerning the Distance Learning Program at Ikipujung Pandang were reviewed. After reviewing the literature presenting the description of the Distance Learning Program, the researchers made a list of problems related to the implementation of the program and recommendations for improvement.

DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM AT IKIPUJUNG PANDANG

Rationale

The Distance Learning Program at Ikipujung Pandang is one of the eleven distance learning programs in Indonesia. In 1981-1982, the Distance Learning Program was designed to improve the quality of secondary teachers in South Sulawesi Province. The basic objectives of the program are to improve the quality of secondary school teachers who graduate from the non-degree programs, and to improve the teachers' ability in teaching-learning processes.

In the 1982-1983 academic year, there were over seven thousand junior high school teachers in South Sulawesi Province. Of the total, 25% had a senior high school education. They were teaching junior high school pupils although they had merely graduated from the senior high school themselves. Based on their high school certificates, these teachers were categorized as unqualified for teaching at the junior high school level.

The same academic year, 50% of the total number of junior high school teachers in this province had certificated from PGSLP, the former teacher training institution for junior high school. A large number of them have served as teachers for more than ten years. They expressed a need to improve their teaching skills in order to improve the quality of their teaching.

The establishment of the Distance Learning Program at Ikipujung Pandang was intended to provide solutions to the problems that are faced by secondary school teachers in rural areas. Additional training enables these teachers to learn new methods and concepts. For various reasons, these teachers are not able to enroll at the university for additional training on a regular and full-time basis. The Distance Learning Program was designed to provide access for individuals who wanted to undertake university study, especially in educational sciences.

In the 1983-1984 academic year over ten thousand high school graduates applied for university admittance. Only 25% were admitted. President of the University, Dr. P. Parawansa, explained that the Distance Learning Program is intended to overcome such a problem. He stressed that the objectives of the project are to increase the university's enrollment through the open university programs and to improve the quality of teachers.

In the 1982-1983 academic year, there were over three thousand teachers enrolled in the Distance Learning Program . Their official positions varied in rank and salary. Programs offered were initially at the Diploma 2 level in the areas of natural science, mathematics, English, and home economics. Teachers were required to take basic courses in educational science as well, including teaching strategies, instructional media, teaching-learning interaction, evaluation, and practice teaching.

Students and Courses

A printed course book is the basic instructional medium used in the Distance Learning Program. The course book can be described as a learning module, a self-instruction package dealing with a single conceptual unit of subject matter. It is an attempt to individualize learning by enabling the students to master one unit of content before moving to another.

The basic module consists of three main components: the student activity booklet, worksheet, and answer sheet. The first component, the student activity booklet, includes an introduction to the course, the course objectives, learning activities, course content, and references. The worksheet component contains assignments or questions that the student is to respond to answer. The answers to these assignments are found in the third component, the answer sheet.

Each module is written by a "course team" consisting of specialists and editors in the specific subject matter field. These are faculty members at the university, who are responsible for selecting the curriculum content for the modules.

The Distance Learning Program operated at 15 learning centers located in local secondary schools. Distance Learning students attend these learning centers, usually during weekday afternoons or on Sundays, for individual study, group discussion, tutoring and examinations. Students also pick up their materials at the learning centers.

Tutoring is a technique widely employed in the Distance Learning Program. There are currently 48 tutors involved in the program, who are required to have a B.A. or Masters' degree in education with major emphasis in the subject matter field they tutor.

The students who completed their examinations at the end of the first year of their program did well. Over 90% passed the final examination in their subject matter area and in basic education. This is similar to the results of conventional education at the university. Tutors noted that, even with the difficulties of geographic displacement and problems with development of materials for the first year, the motivation of Distance Learning students was very high.

PROBLEMS AND THEIR RESOLUTION

Student's Learning Problems

The most obvious characteristic of distance learning is that students are not on campus. They are physically distant from the teacher for most of the learning-teaching period. Students of the Distant Learning Program in Indonesia still have problems reading and writing, which they feel they need to improve in order to succeed in their learning activities. A major problem is that of managing their own learning effectively, particularly in scheduling and using time. The total time that most teachers have available for part-time study each week may be no more than ten to fifteen hours.

The curriculum of the Distance Learning Program requires that the distance learning students take an average of ten credits each semester. Survey results indicated that managing time, according to the students, was a major problem.

Problems Related to Learning Modules

On the part of the university, a major problem was the fact that the development of learning modules is behind schedule, because the faculty members are busy with other duties and lack time for writing these modules. It is also reported that because of the lack of qualified personnel and resources, the duplication and distribution of learning modules frequently lags behind schedule.

Members of the learning task force also cited the faculty members' contribution as the weakest component in the program. Creating a learning module that meets the criteria for good distance learning materials, which is an effective teaching tool, requires a high skill level. Because faculty members have not had the experience of writing learning modules, they often do not meet the basic criteria.

Problems Related to Geographic Isolation

Students in Distance Learning Program are at a distance from their educational institution, their teacher, and their peers for most of the learning-teaching process. It is clear from the Indonesian case that, because of the geographical isolation and the problems that creates, distance learning students have some particular needs and require special help. One of the major problems cited by students is that both they and their tutors at the district centers need to meet with faculty members of the university who write learning modules. They need from faculty more information concerning the content of the learning modules and other information related to their learning difficulties.

The task force of the program has planned that every semester faculty members who write learning modules meet with distance learning students in provincial districts to conduct face-to-face instruction and to discuss learning difficulties that distance learning students experience. The first indications are that this plan is reducing some of the problems brought about by geographic isolation.

An additional problem is the need in improving training for tutors who work with students at the district centers. Most of these teachers have not received training in educational methodology and both students and tutors have requested assistance. SUMMARY

Problems Related to Learning Centers

Learning centers are one form of support service for distance learning students. Distance learning students attend the various 15 centers, usually during week-day afternoons or on Sundays for individual study, group discussion, tutoring and to take examinations. Learning centers are also the places where the students pick up their learning modules and supplementary materials. The learning centers provide a support for students while offering a meeting space. While the facilities may be limited or not quite appropriate to students' needs, at least one student need has been met by the learning center.

A major problem encountered in the Distance Learning Program has been that some students have difficulty attending learning centers regularly because they live far from them. There appears to be a high correlation between attendance on a regular basis at the learning centers and distance from the learning center. Students who live far from the learning centers have indicated that perhaps additional materials and guidance could be given to them to organize their time more effectively when they cannot make the trip to the center.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Distance learning is a system of providing education for students without their having to attend classes on a regular, full-time basis at a conventional educational institution. [Holmberg, 1981]

A Distance Learning Program was established at Ikipujung Pandang, Indonesia to: 1) overcome the limitation of space faced by conventional educational institutions , 2) provide an opportunity for teachers to continue their studies, 3) provide educational opportunity for teachers in geographically isolated areas, and 4) deliver a cost-effective program compared to conventional delivery methods. A much higher proportion of the teachers are employed, married, or are older than the average university student. Academic achievement of the teachers in the program is about the same as regular university students. [Wedemeyer, 1982]

The teachers select a Distance Learning Program based upon their educational needs. Four basic categories of instructional media used in the program are: print, audio-visual, practical work and interpersonal communication. Print is the most important and commonly used medium in the program. Academic achievement of the teachers was about the same as regular university students.

The following conclusions were reached.

1) The general objective of the program at Ikipujung Pandang is to support educational development and innovation in rural Indonesia.

2) In the short-run, the objectives of the program are to improve the quality of secondary school teachers who graduate from non-degree programs. For the long run, the objectives are to increase university student enrollments and to improve the quality of teachers.

3) Learning modules supported by tutorial activities were the instructional media used in the first year of the program.

4) The implementation of the program is now in it's second year and some problems need to to be resolved. These are: a) student learning difficulties, b) problems related to the development and distribution of learning modules, c) problems related to geographic isolation, and d) problems related to learning centers. Recommendations for resolving the problems were made.

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